

Image of the VA Seal.

DIVERSITY@WORK

A PUBLICATION OF THE OFFICE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION,  
FORMERLY THE OFFICE OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT AND EQUAL  
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 3

<http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/ca/daw.htm>

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Bookmarks:

Alliance for Work-Life Progress

[www.awlp.org](http://www.awlp.org)

Association for Women in Science

[www.awis.org](http://www.awis.org)

Federally Employed Women

[www.few.org](http://www.few.org)

Mexican American Women's National Association

[www.hermana.org](http://www.hermana.org)

National Women's Law Center

[www.nwlc.org](http://www.nwlc.org)

Women in Science and Engineering

[www.wise.sunysb.edu](http://www.wise.sunysb.edu)

Women's Bureau

[www.dol.gov/wb](http://www.dol.gov/wb)

WorldatWork  
[www.worldatwork.org](http://www.worldatwork.org)

Contact information for other diversity-related organizations can be found on the NEW ODI Web site at: [www.diversity.hr.va.gov/org](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/org).

## COFFEY'S KEYNOTES: A STRATEGIC PLAN!

In the fall of 2008, the staff of the then named Office of Diversity Management and EEO embarked on strategic planning initiative for the office —the first of its kind in VA. The intent was to develop a living road map for incorporating diversity and inclusion in the VA, based on the best practices in the public and private sectors. The result was VA's first Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, finalized in February 2009. This plan, developed in collaboration with VA's Administrations, Staff Offices, and many other stakeholders internally and externally, serves as a living roadmap to guide our efforts in making VA a leader in creating and sustaining a high-performing workforce that leverages diversity and empowers all employees to achieve superior results in serving our Nation's Veterans. The Plan also served to drive the functional reorganization and renaming of our office to the "Office of Diversity and Inclusion."

The Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan is specifically aligned with VA's strategic objective to "recruit, develop, and retain a competent, committed, and diverse workforce that provides high-quality service to veterans and their families." As a major health care and benefits provider, VA must maintain a workforce that is reflective of the communities it serves.

The Plan was developed with the underlying mission in mind: "to foster a diverse workforce and inclusive work environment that ensures equal opportunity through national policy development, workforce analysis, outreach, retention, and education to best serve our Nation's Veterans." It is designed to achieve three over-arching goals: 1) Create a diverse, high performing workforce that reflects the communities we serve by identifying and eliminating barriers to equal opportunity; 2) Cultivate an inclusive workplace that enables full participation through strategic outreach and retention; and 3) Promote accountability, education, and communication on diversity and inclusion matters with VA employees, leaders, and stakeholders to facilitate outstanding service to Veterans.

The implementation of this Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan reflects the Department's continued efforts to improve service to our Nation's Veterans. As a public service agency, diversity and inclusion must be the cornerstones of our human capital management strategy. Working collaboratively with you—the highly dedicated employees, managers, and stakeholders of VA—we will seize the challenges and opportunities to create and sustain a diverse and inclusive

workforce that best serves our Nation's most precious assets—our Veterans. I hope you take the time to read VA's Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan in its entirety online, just visit the ODI Web site at <http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/docs/strat.pdf>. We invite you to join us in this important journey. Thank you for your support.

~Georgia Coffey

## CELEBRATE!

VA proudly joins the Nation in celebrating Women's History Month and Irish-American History Month during March and Deaf History Month from March 13 to April 15.

### Irish-American History Month

Irish immigrants began arriving to the United States around 1816 as skilled artisans and masons to help build New England canals and waterways. Today Irish Americans make up about 36.5 million citizens, second among reported United States ancestry, and eight times the population of Ireland. Many of our Nation's most influential citizens are descendants of those early Irish immigrants including Presidents John F. Kennedy and William J. Clinton, as well as Henry Ford. This month we celebrate Irish-American History month established by Congress in 1995, and recognize the accolades and achievements of Irish Americans towards our Nation's success.

### Women's History Month

National Women's History Month grew from an effort to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of women in American history. In 1980, President Carter issued the first Presidential Proclamation calling on the American people to remember the contributions of women. By 1987, fourteen governors had declared March as Women's History Month and, that same year, Congress and the President followed by declaring March as National Women's History Month.

Image of National Women's History Month poster.

This year's theme, "Women Taking the Lead to Save our Planet", recognizes women who have shown exceptional vision and leadership to save our planet. Long before the first Earth Day in 1970, women were playing a major role in the effort to protect the environment. Contributions by individual such as Rachel Carson, a biologist, who studied and researched the effects of pesticide use in agriculture, continue to push the boundaries of how we think about preserving and cultivating the world around us.

Overall, VA employment of women in permanent positions grew to 58.93 percent in fiscal year (FY) 2008. Also in FY 2008, women in the leadership pipeline grew to 47.73 percent, women in the SES grew to 33 percent, and the number of female Veterans grew to 7.51 percent. Managers and supervisors are

encouraged to plan observance activities this month—and throughout the year—to honor these women for delivering vital health care, benefits, memorial services to our Nation's Veterans and their families. To learn more about VA's National Women's Program, contact Wanda J. Jones at [Wanda.Jones@va.gov](mailto:Wanda.Jones@va.gov).

#### Deaf History Month

As we celebrate the 200th anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln's birth we also commemorate the observance of Deaf History Month. While President Lincoln's historical contributions are widely known regarding preserving the Union during the Civil War, those of us who work for the Department of Veterans Affairs are very familiar with the origins of the VA mission "to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan," a direct quote from Lincoln's second inaugural address delivered March 4, 1865. As we move into the 2009 celebration of Deaf History Month, we honor President Lincoln for his contribution to Deaf History.

On April 8, 1864, President Lincoln signed the charter which created Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C.—an event which is referred to as "Gallaudet Charter Day" in the university community. The origins of Deaf History Month date back to March 13, 1988, when students at Gallaudet University staged a near riot, demanding a deaf president for the university. The date commemorates the victory of this "Deaf President Now" movement, which resulted in King Jordan becoming the first deaf president of Gallaudet. Deaf History Month ends on April 15, the day The American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut opened its doors in 1817. To learn more about VA's People with Disabilities Program, contact David Walton at [David.Walton@va.gov](mailto:David.Walton@va.gov).

#### FIELD NOTES

##### News You Can Use

##### Outreach and Retention

In an effort to assist managers and supervisors in making meaningful progress in their diversity and human capital goals in VA, ODI met with the Administrations' EEO managers and compiled a compendium of "best practices" in recruitment outreach and retention from VA's own diversity community. The resulting guide, *Best Practices in Recruitment Outreach and Retention*, is now available on the ODI Web site at <http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/docs/Guide.pdf>. This compendium reflects the recruitment outreach and retention strategies that have proven to be effective in advancing VA's strategic objective to "recruit, develop, and retain a competent, committed, and diverse workforce that provides high quality service to Veterans and their families" (VA Strategic Plan FY 2006-2011, Enabling Goal E, Objective E-1). For more information, contact ODI at [odi@va.gov](mailto:odi@va.gov).

##### Policy Alert

On February 9, 2009, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) informed Federal headquarters-level Chief Human Capital Officers and Human Resources (HR) Directors that, due to a court decision, departments and agencies are now to send any requests to OPM for its approval to pass over veterans preference eligibles with 30% or more compensable service-connected disabilities for positions in the Title 5 excepted service, e.g., the Federal Career Intern Program. VA HR offices are to send any such pass over requests to OPM for approval, versus independently making and documenting these determinations as allowed previously. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit issued the decision which drives this change—Stephen W. Gingery v. Department of Defense—on December 24, 2008. For more information, visit the Office of Human Resources Management Web site at <http://vaww1.va.gov/ohrm/index.htm>.

#### Nontraditional Student Internships

VA's 2009 National Internship Program Guide, which describes seven national nonprofit internship programs that enable your organization to address immediate staffing needs as well as workforce planning and diversity goals, is now available on the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) Web site at [www.diversity.hr.va.gov/spi/internships.htm](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/spi/internships.htm).

The majority of these internship programs provide college students with an experiential employment opportunity for a 10-week summer session or a 15-week spring or fall session. For more information, contact Brenda Martin at [Brenda.Martin@va.gov](mailto:Brenda.Martin@va.gov).

#### Community Prosperity Partnership (CPP)

The 37th Annual National IMAGE, Inc. Training Conference and Exposition for Federal employees will be held May 11–16, 2009, at the Crown Plaza Riverwalk Hotel in San Antonio, Texas. The conference theme is "The Third Millennium... Linking Latino History for Leadership and Change in the 21st Century."

A "Salute to Veterans" is also being planned for May 16, 2009. More information on this outreach in San Antonio is to come. For more information about the Salute to Veterans, contact José O. Marrero at [Jose.Marrero@va.gov](mailto:Jose.Marrero@va.gov). For more information about the conference, visit [www.nationalimageinc.org](http://www.nationalimageinc.org).

Image of Community Prosperity Partnership logo.

#### WEB SITE SPOTLIGHT

Days of Remembrance

<http://www.ushmm.org/remembrance/dor/years/detail.php?content=2009>

Content: In accordance with its Congressional mandate, the United States Holocaust Museum is responsible for leading the Nation in commemorating the Days of Remembrance and for encouraging and sponsoring appropriate observances throughout the United States. Since 1982, the museum has

organized and led the national Days of Remembrance ceremony in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda with Holocaust survivors, liberators, members of Congress, White House officials, the diplomatic corps, and community leaders in attendance. This year's Holocaust Remembrance Day is April 21.

Must-See Features: "Organize a Holocaust Remembrance Day" which provides a list of a few suggestions on how to remember and honor the victims of the Holocaust.

Accessibility: This Web site is Section 508 compliant.

Contact Info:

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum  
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW  
Washington, DC 20024-2126  
(202) 488-0400  
TTY: (202) 488-0406

The Days of Remembrance observance is different from the Federal Interagency Holocaust Remembrance Program (FIHRP). The FIHRP (<http://www.holocaustremembrance.org>) is intended to educate Federal employees, students, and the general public about the Holocaust. Last year the event was sponsored by 25 departments and agencies of the U.S. Government. This year's FIHRP will take place on April 29. For information on how to support FIHRP, contact Robert Turtill at [Robert.Turtill@va.gov](mailto:Robert.Turtill@va.gov).

2009 NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH THEME:

"Women Taking the Lead to Save Our Planet" by Barbara Talley

"The more clearly we focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we will have for destruction." These thought-provoking words are from the iconic environmentalist Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring*. They are also inscribed on this year's National Women's History Poster whose theme is appropriately, "Women Taking the Lead to Save Our Planet." The theme of saving our planet is vital and timely, for what good will it do to increase our lifespan if we do not have an earthly home capable of sustaining future human, animal, and plant life?

The promoters of the video, *Global Warming: Rising Storm* caution us, "The burning of fossil fuels has placed the planet on the tipping point of global catastrophe and that Global Warming is driving dramatic changes in weather." They challenge us to answer the following questions: "How much irreversible change to our atmosphere has already occurred? Can we control the devastating effects that burning fossil fuels will cause? If there is not an immediate global initiative to save the planet, what will the future hold?"

"Women Taking the Lead to Save Our Planet" is a visionary theme issued by the Women's History Project. It is an immediate challenge to women to lead the global initiative to save our planet. Our fathers, our sons, our daughters, even we, have unfortunately become insensitive to or have also developed a taste for destruction and it is hurting us all. "Without a vision, the people perish," and in the wake of perishing, they destroy everything around them, the water, the air, the soil, the landscape, the natural habitats and homes of other creatures, the climate, and even more egregiously, other humans. Clearly, we need a new vision and our vision must be of a healthy, sustainable, and healed planet. Visions unite, inspire, and channel energies. We women must take the lead in saving our planet, for we are the co-creators in creation and caretakers of souls. Saving the planet requires doing what we must to make sure that our children and our children's children inherit a planet that is safe and habitable. But to do that, we must first focus on the planet and see it, really see it. For to really see its beauty, its value, and its true magnificence, is to love it, value it, and commit to saving it.

Photograph of Barbara Talley.

To save the planet, we must focus our attention and do something now. Focusing our attention is another way of saying, think, reflect, believe, imagine, and act! According to Lisa Gross in her article, "Looking at the Sky through a Glass Ceiling," women have been helping us to see and understand our universe more clearly from as far back as 200 AD. She writes, "Aglaonike, considered the first woman astronomer, figured out how to predict lunar eclipses as far back as 200 B.C." In 370 AD, Hypatia of Alexandria, an ancient scientist and astronomer born in Egypt is credited with saying, "Reserve your right to think, for even to think wrongly is better than not to think at all." Too much is at stake and we cannot afford to not think at all.

According to Lisa Gross in "Women in Astronomy," "In the early 1900s, women were not allowed to operate telescopes. Instead they were hired as 'computers' to analyze and compile data from the telescopes." But that didn't stop pioneers like Henrietta Swann Leavitt from discovering a method for calculating distances in the universe, or Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin in 1925 from being the first person to earn a Ph.D. in the new field of astronomy, or Jocelyn Bell Burnell a graduate from Cambridge from discovering pulsars in 1967. Yes, we have led in the past and we will continue to lead in the future. And, with the signing of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act into law on January 29, 2009, by President Obama, one more stone has been removed blocking equality for women.

This Women's History Month, we pause to salute women like Rachel Carson who is credited with inspiring much of the late 20th century's environmental concern with her documented work on the effect of pesticides on the ecology. We praise Jane Goodall for her work with saving chimpanzees, beautiful creatures who can not speak for themselves. And we also pay tribute to Wangari Maathai who

became the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004. Wangari Maathai fought against deforestation in Kenya by organizing primarily village women to plant trees, to stop soil erosion and water pollution, and to provide firewood and income for their families.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Everyone can be great because everyone can serve." The question is, "How can you serve the planet?" I ask you now to take the challenge, take the lead, and figure out how you can help save our planet! Start in your own community, your own home, or your own office. Wherever you are, make a difference right there. I live in the State of Maryland, and have read about many local examples of entrepreneurs, filmmakers, environmental education specialists, authors, teachers, students, mothers, activists, conservationists, and environmentalists who have already taken initiative and are already making a difference.

Barbara S. Talley is a keynote speaker, author, and poet speaking on the themes of Vision, Values, and Virtues, Empowerment, Diversity, Communications, Goal Setting and Time Management. You can reach her at (301) 428-4831 or on her Web site at [www.ThePoetSpeaks.com](http://www.ThePoetSpeaks.com). Join her for the Department of Veterans Affairs Central Office Women's History Month kickoff event on March 5, 2009, as she shares how ordinary people have taken the lead to save our planet and will offer some ideas on what you can do. The Women's History Month program will be held from noon to 1 p.m. in the G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery Veterans Conference Center.

#### OFFICE OF RESOLUTION MANAGEMENT (ORM) Root Cause of Workplace Disputes Video

In VA, most EEO complaints are the result of a dispute between an employee and supervisor. Of course, there are a variety of reasons leading to these disputes and EEO complaints. ORM has developed a video featuring six two-to-three minute vignettes depicting dramatizations of workplace disputes that lead to EEO complaints. This "Root Causes of Workplace Disputes" demonstrates the value of identifying the causes of disputes that lead to conflict and complaints of discrimination. At the conclusion of each vignette, the audience learns what could have been done differently to have avoided the dispute. The video increases the viewers' awareness of how others perceive and process information; enhance their communication skills; and help them maintain a cooperative atmosphere in the workplace. Understanding the causes of workplace disputes may change behaviors and help foster more efficient, effective, and positive communications in the work environment. When this happens, more focus and attention can be directed to providing quality service to our Nation's Veterans and their families.

ORM is working closely with VA Learning University to develop several training modalities to introduce this video to VA's global audience. The "Root Cause of



Workplace Disputes” video is currently available for viewing on ORM’s Web site at <http://vaww.va.gov/orm>. For additional information, contact Earnestine Richardson, Office of Policy and Compliance, at [Earnestine.Richardson@va.gov](mailto:Earnestine.Richardson@va.gov).

Image of ORM logo.

ODI ON THE INTERNET, [www.diversity.hr.va.gov](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov)

The mission of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) is to foster a diverse workforce and an inclusive work environment that ensures equal opportunity—through national policy development, workforce analysis, outreach, retention, and education—to best serve our Nation’s veterans. Here’s a sampling of online tools available that can help leverage diversity and build inclusion:

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Birthday, Black History Month, and other special observance resources.

Events, conferences, conventions, and programs.

Links to professional and community organizations.

Best practices for diversity management.

Image of an individual holding a globe.

ODI IN YOUR E-MAIL INBOX

Once a week, ODI sends out NewsLink, an e-mail message with annotated links to current news items and other information related to leveraging diversity and building inclusion. For a FREE subscription to this weekly electronic news service, e-mail us at [odi@va.gov](mailto:odi@va.gov) with the words SUBSCRIBE NEWS in the subject line. You can find a current copy of NewsLink on the ODI Web site at this address: [www.diversity.hr.va.gov/ca/newslink.htm](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/ca/newslink.htm).

ODI ON YOUR TV SCREEN (OR PC MONITOR)

Diversity News is a monthly video program produced by the VACO Broadcasting Center for ODI. Each program runs for a month, immediately following VA News. A copy of each program will be placed on the ODI Web site (as the files become available) at this address: [www.diversity.hr.va.gov/ca/diversitynews.htm](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/ca/diversitynews.htm).

FROM THE 2009 DIVERSITY CALENDAR

[www.diversity.hr.va.gov/calendar](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/calendar)

MARCH

National Women’s History Month

Irish-American Heritage Month

HACU Annual National Capitol Forum

on Hispanic Higher Education  
March 1–3; Washington, DC  
[www.hacu.net](http://www.hacu.net)

NCLR Capital Awards  
March 3; Washington, DC  
[www.nclr.org](http://www.nclr.org)

2009 DeafNation Expo  
March 7; Austin, TX  
March 14; Orlando, FL  
March 21; Kansas City, MO  
March 28; Minneapolis, MN  
[www.deafnation.com](http://www.deafnation.com)

International Women's Day  
March 8

Deaf History Month  
March 13–April 15

The Summit on Leading Diversity  
March 16–18; Atlanta, GA  
[www.linkageinc.com](http://www.linkageinc.com)

#### APRIL

CAREERS & the disABLED Magazine's Career Expo for People with Disabilities  
April 3; Boston, MA  
April 24; New York, NY  
[www.eop.com](http://www.eop.com)

League of United Latin American Citizens National Women's Conference  
April 3–4; Boston, MA  
[www.lulac.org](http://www.lulac.org)

African American Federal Executive Association Workshop & Training  
Conference  
April 13–15; Williamsburg, VA  
<http://www.aafea.org/2009conference.html>

Holocaust Remembrance Day  
April 21

Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work  
April 23

Multiple Perspectives on Access, Inclusion, and Disability Conference  
April 28–29; Columbus, OH  
<http://ada.osu.edu>

Federal Interagency Holocaust Remembrance Program  
April 29

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Visit our Web site, [www.diversity.hr.va.gov](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov) for additional staff e-mail addresses.

## OTHER USEFUL LINKS

Under Secretary for Health Diversity Advisory Board [www.va.gov/diversity](http://www.va.gov/diversity)

VA's Office of Human Resources & Administration

[www.va.gov/ofcadmin](http://www.va.gov/ofcadmin)

VA's Office of Resolution Management

[www.va.gov/orm](http://www.va.gov/orm)

VA's Office of Human Resources Management

[www.va.gov/ohrm](http://www.va.gov/ohrm)

## GOT NEWS?

We want to hear from you! If you'd like to share your story ideas, comments, or suggestions, please e-mail us at [odi@va.gov](mailto:odi@va.gov) with the words DIVERSITY@WORK in the subject line.